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There are Freshmen and Freshmen

Every student that comes from a secondary high school approved by the North Central Association, may be described as a fictional character with fixed and determined characteristics. His characteristics are fixed by the carefully planned standards of our organizing associations. His fictional character arises from the sad fact that he is so often supposed to be something which he really is not at all. And the something he is supposed to be is first class material for Freshman Class.

About six years ago I faced two Freshman Classes, starting, as it seemed, from "scratch." One class came from our own Jesuit schools and had been drilled in three to four years of Latin. Whether they had ever got beyond a distaste for Caesar's subjunctives and his indirect discourse, or whether the poetry of Virgil ever meant anything but boredom to their young lives, is more than I am prepared to say. I had them only for English, so I never directly sounded the depths of their Latin knowledge. The other class was made up of pre-medics who came from a variety of schools, all approved, but who reached my Freshman Class, ninety percent of them, without Latin preparation of any sort. Now of course the enemy of Latin would insist, *a priori*, that this lack would in no way affect their fundamental preparation for a class in Freshman English; but, as their sad and sorrowful instructor, let me say that the critic of Latin is all wrong.

It didn't take me two weeks to find out that between the two classes was all the difference between a well prepared and a badly prepared group of students. Just why a drilling in Latin syntax should mean that the student was better able to handle an English sentence, probably Cardinal Newman could best explain. The fact remains that the Freshman Class which had had its Latin did work in English almost twice as good as the class that had not had that advantage. Somehow or other even the technical language of the classroom they understood more readily, and syntax had become so familiar to those who had studied it in the Latin context, that they found no difficulty in un-

derstanding what the professor was trying to make clear to them in their fundamental rhetoric. The other class sat vacant-eyed and drooping-jawed before problems and principles which one would think a class should have known even as High School Freshmen.

The spelling of the pre-medics was far less correct than that of the other class for they had no idea of the Latin roots from which many of the English words took their normal rise. A classical allusion in the text completely floored my pre-medics whereas those who had four years of Latin found not the slightest difficulty with them. If they did not recognize them, at least they were in a position to look them up.

I found that the boy with Latin wrote a better sentence, had a clearer conception of form, had more imagination and far more logical thought. And this in spite of the fact that on looking up the record of the boys in my good Freshman Class, I found that they had been rather mediocre students in their former classes. Besides they did not work for me nearly as conscientiously as the pre-medics. It was not that they were absolutely so good but that they were relatively so much better than the other Freshmen.

Perhaps this all sounds like a "*post hoc ergo propter hoc*" case, but I am absolutely sure that it is not. I checked them up from a variety of viewpoints and found the results always the same. The class with Latin was consistently better in English.

So it took a Freshman English class to make me an enthusiastic advocate of Latin as a preparation for college work. Of course one always finds in his own writing and in his own reading how absolutely invaluable his classical training has been. Yet he feels this may be because of the years he has devoted to the wealth of the classics. In this one experience, however, I found that the four years of drilling in high school Latin, certainly a very uninspiring routine for the average boy, was just the finest possible preparation for the work in English which our Freshman classes had to do.

And if the Freshman Class showed so much difference, fancy the difference when the student reached English poetry or drama, with their roots so firmly

buried in the classic soil, with the wealth of Latin and Greek allusions studding their lines, and the greatest masters of English prose and poetry, masters of and enthusiasts for Latin. I may not have taught my Freshmen of that year very much English, but they certainly taught me a great deal about Latin.

Daniel A. Lord, S. J.

The New Liddell and Scott Our teachers of Greek, whose purposes whether in teaching Greek in the higher classes or in following certain lines of research with a view to self-improvement, are not adequately served by the old "Liddell and Scott," will be glad to hear of a new edition of this monumental Greek-English Lexicon. The first instalment has just come to hand. It is expected that the new edition will be issued in ten parts of approximately 192 pages each at 10s 6d net. Alternatively, subscribers may compound for a payment of four guineas for the whole work. Messrs. G. E. Stechert and Co. (31 East 10th Street, New York City) furnish the work for \$21.00. The first part runs down to *apobaino*. Even a casual glance reveals the vast superiority of the new edition over the old. The Berlin *Gnomon*, in the course of a lengthy review, calls it "a superb piece of work, deserving of our thanks." The editors have availed themselves of the publication of all such material as has come to light in recent years. In reading the ten page Preface one exclaims with Vergil *tantae molis erat!* As the price is rather high, it may not be useless to find out from the Publishers (Clarendon Press) whether arrangement can be made for a reduction.

J. A. K.

Berchmans Classical Academy Holds First Meeting of the Year. The Berchmans Classical Academy of St. Stanislaus Seminary, Florissant, held its first meeting for the year 1925-26, on Sunday, September 20. The main business of the meeting was the election of officers for the coming year. They were chosen as follows: Mr. Crawley, last year's president was re-elected; Mr. Rawe also retained his office of vice-president; Mr. Fencel replaced Mr. Holloran as secretary, and Mr. Blayz replaced Mr. O'Hara as lecturer.

The election was followed by a paper read by Mr. Crawley on, "Cicero, the Orator." The paper was full of valuable information for future teachers, relating as it did, in part, the story of the early

years and education of the great Roman, periods of his life which many treatises pass over in silence.

The Academy has decided on a new feature for the programs of its future meetings. This will be a competitive translation of some passage of Latin or Greek, in which two members shall defend their versions against each other and the entire assembly. The passage chosen for the next meeting is one from Cicero's "De Republica," Mr. Rawe and Mr. Reid being the opposing translators.

The first round of papers has already been arranged, and shows a decided preference for Greek subjects. One paper is to be read at each meeting, in the following order:

Life and Times of Socrates—Mr. Blayz.

The Christian Vergil—Mr. Bannon.

The Ten Great Athenian Orators—Mr. Firstos.

Resolved, that Demosthenes Should be Substituted for Cicero as the Great Model of an Orator—Messrs. Fencel and Holloran.

The Character of Socrates as Exemplified in the Crito and the Phaedo—Mr. O'Hara.

Evolution of the Athenian Judiciary Procedure—Mr. Rawe.

From Socrates to Aristotle—Mr. Reid.

Why the Bright Promise of Hellas Failed That the Greeks were a bright people is the tritest truism. Their quick wit, their keen analysis, their bent to abstract thought, above all their tendency to rationalize, are being shouted from the housetops. To Demosthenes they were of all men *oxytatoi gnonai*.

Professor Jebb in his *Primer of Greek Literature* devotes a special paragraph to "the rational energy of the Greeks." "They were," he writes, "the first people who tried to make reason the guide of their social life." Among them "we find writers of all sorts, poets and historians and philosophers, habitually striving to get at the reason of things. On this side, Greek literature has an interest such as belongs to no other literature. It shows us how men first set about systematic thinking." The Greek books "contain results, too, which have had the deepest and widest influence on the whole of modern life. . . . The thoughts of the great Greek thinkers have been bearing fruit in the world ever since they were first uttered. . . . In some special sciences the work done by the Greeks remains a basis of study to this day. . . . It is in Greek historians and Greek orators that we read some of the political lessons most directly useful for our own time." "Under the influence of Christianity, two principal elements have entered into

the spiritual life of the modern world: one of these has been Hebrew; the other has been Greek."

Matthew Arnold, in Chapter IV of *Culture and Anarchy*, speaks of Hellenism and Hebraism as of the two greatest "spiritual disciplines" the world has ever known. To him "the uppermost idea with Hellenism is to see things as they really are." "To get rid of one's ignorance, to see things as they are, and by seeing them as they are to see them in their beauty, is the simple and attractive ideal which Hellenism holds out before human nature; and from the simplicity and charm of this ideal, Hellenism, and human life in the hands of Hellenism, is invested with a kind of aerial ease, clearness, and radiancy; they are full of what we call sweetness and light."

The Greeks were not only speculative, but also practical, thinkers; indeed eminently practical. At any rate the Stoics insist that the supreme canon of conduct is "to live conformably to nature" (*homologoumenos te physei zen*). As for ourselves, after the lapse of 2000 years, with all the springs of knowledge opened for us by Christianity, we have not got beyond this simple canon: "Human nature is the Norm of all Morality." The Greeks knew as much twenty centuries ago, one would think. Why then did they fail? That they did fail is one of the most emphatic lessons driven home by the Apostle of the gentiles. *Quid in causa putas esse?*

Matthew Arnold, in his essay on Hebraism and Hellenism, which contains *bona mixta malis*, offers the following solution:

"Apparently it was the Hellenic conception of human nature which was unsound, for the world could not live by it. Absolutely to call it unsound however, is to fall into the common error of its Hebraizing enemies: but it was unsound at that particular moment of man's development, it was premature. The indispensable basis of conduct and self-control, the platform upon which alone the perfection aimed at by Greece can come into bloom, was not to be reached by our race so easily; centuries of probation and discipline were needed to bring us to it. Therefore the bright promise of Hellenism faded, and Hebraism ruled the world." Arnold did not rise high enough to see Hellenism in its true perspective. Gilbert K. Chesterton, in his *St. Francis of Assisi*, points out the deadly flaw in the magnificent pageant of Greek civilization:

"The whole of the high civilization of antiquity had ended in the learning of a certain lesson; that is, in its conversion to Christianity. But that lesson was a psychological fact as well as a theological faith. That pagan civilisation had indeed been a very high civilisation . . . ; it was the highest

that humanity ever reached. It had discovered its still unrivalled arts of poetry and plastic representation; it had discovered its own permanent political ideals; it had discovered its own clear system of logic and of language. But above all, it had discovered its own mistake.

"That mistake was too deep to be ideally defined; the shorthand of it is to call it the mistake of nature-worship. It might almost as truly be called the mistake of being natural; and it was a very natural mistake. The Greeks, the great guides and pioneers of pagan antiquity, started out with the idea of something splendidly obvious and direct; the idea that if man walked straight ahead on the high road of reason and nature, he could come to no harm; especially if he was, as the Greek was, eminently enlightened and intelligent. We might be so flippant as to say that man was simply to follow his nose, so long as it was a Greek nose. And the case of the Greeks themselves is alone enough to illustrate the strange but certain fatality that attends upon this fallacy.

"No sooner did the Greeks themselves begin to follow their noses and their own notion of being natural, than the queerest thing in history seems to have happened to them. It may be remarked that our more repulsive realists never give us the benefit of their realism. Their studies of unsavory subjects never take note of the testimony which they bear to the truths of a traditional morality. . . . Nobody has written a real moral history of the Greeks. Nobody has seen the scale or the strangeness of the story: the wisest men in the world set out to be natural; and the most unnatural thing in the world was the very first thing they did. The immediate effect of saluting the sun and the sunny sanity of nature was a perversion spreading like a pestilence. The greatest and even the purest philosophers could not apparently avoid this low sort of lunacy. *Why?*

"It would seem simple enough for the people whose poets had conceived Helen of Troy, whose sculptors had carved the Venus of Milo, to remain healthy on the point. The truth is that people who worship health cannot remain healthy. *When man goes straight, he goes crooked.* When he follows his nose he manages somehow to put his nose out of joint or even to cut off his nose to spite his face; and that in accordance with something much deeper in human nature than nature-worshippers could ever understand. It was the discovery of that deeper thing, humanly speaking, that constituted the conversion to Christianity. There is a bias in man like the bias in the bowl; and Christianity was the discovery of how to correct the bias

and therefore hit the mark. There are many who will smile at the saying; but it is profoundly true to say that the glad good news brought by the Gospel was *the news of original sin*."

J. A. K.

(Editor's Note: Readers of the *Classical Bulletin* will be interested in the following account, written by a Sister, at present a Latin professor in a Catholic high school, and formerly a student at a well-known university of the Middle West, where she took a four year course in Latin.)

Latin in the Public Schools The passing of the years had dimmed the memory of my college Latin days, so I betook myself to the old campus to visit my Latin professor. The beautiful entrance, the enlarged grounds, the new buildings—all bespoke progress, at least material. Had my Latin teacher changed too? Would her method of teaching the ancient classics be different than in the days of old? Somehow I doubted it.

Small of stature, gray-haired, alert, keen of mind, humorous, with a friendly cordiality she greeted me. Surely I might be permitted once again to be a member of her class. Seated there in front of her, the mist of the years rolled away, and the class was the same as in the days of yore.

It was a first class in college Latin. They were studying *De Senectute*—these thirty young girls who responded so intelligently to the enthusiasm of their professor. Miss ——— made the assignment for the next lesson indicating the various points of grammatical construction, history, and style which they would be expected to emphasize. The teacher spoke so rapidly that no student would dare be inattentive lest she would miss a point of the assignment which covered about fifty lines. Next, the students were called upon to translate the review. Each girl rendered a sentence in exceptionally pure, idiomatic English. I noted that the translation was not prefaced by the reading of the Latin. Now and again Miss ——— interrupted the one translating, calling upon the class to correct a tense that had been rendered in exactly or an adjective or an adverb not placed in the English sentence as Cicero's thought demanded. In each instance she read the phrase or clause in Latin in a manner calculated to bring out the thought. Each time the class was on the alert, five or six pupils being ready to make the requested correction. Here and there a question was asked regarding grammatical construction or historical setting.

The assignment for the day followed. The idiomatic English translation was given just as readily as in the case of the review. It was evident that every point of grammar and history as assigned was called for. Little interesting and humorous points were touched upon to make the lesson alive. I remember that *Gravitas* was pointed out as the keynote of the Roman character in contrast to our *Jazz* notions. A little moral was drawn to the effect that those whose privilege it is to have a college education have the duty to inject more *gravitas* into American citizenship. The little digression into history were most interesting but always pertinent to the lesson.

Of the twenty or more students called upon to recite, only two were unprepared. Miss ——— had a card for each student and as the young lady recited her grade was marked. I remembered those cards distinctly. They were very formidable in our own college days. Miss ——— is a systematic woman. The bell for the close of the hour period came as a distinct shock. The lesson assigned had corresponded exactly with the time allotted for it.

I studied Latin for four years under Miss ———. The Latin class met three times each week. Once a week—during the first year only—we studied prose composition. The other days were devoted to the Latin authors—Livy, Horace, Catullus, Plautus, Pliny, Tacitus, with Cicero's Orations and Virgil's Aeneid as texts for a teachers' method course in the second semester of our senior year. My college text books are marked and annotated as the lessons just described would demand. The small number of pupils in the classes—the total was never more than thirty—gave an opportunity for each to recite in class at least twice a week. A written test about every six weeks together with the semester examination of three hours gave Miss ——— a definite check on our work. Examinations were conducted by the student body under the honor system. No one was ever guilty of cheating during my four years in college.

I am glad that the opportunity presented itself of visiting a class of Latin conducted by my old teacher. I was inclined to minimize her part in my Latin education. Another impression that I carried away from that Latin class was the remarkable knowledge of Latin Grammar possessed by those pupils. They were Public School graduates. The lesson I heard was during the month of October in the second week of the present college year. My congratulations to the Public High School Latin teachers!

S. M. R.

